

Research Article

Entrepreneurship Development and Poverty Nexus: The Case of Niger Delta Villages, Nigeria

Oboreh Justina*

Department of Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Administration & Management, Delta State University of Science & Technology, Ozoro, Nigeria

Abstract

Entrepreneurship has long been seen as a potent means of reducing poverty, especially in developing nations. Many Nigeria government policies over the years were meant for the achievement of targeted objectives on the development of indigenous entrepreneurship. The Niger Delta is plagued with poverty, underdevelopment, and social instability in spite of its wealth. The area is approximately 26,000km² and is the third largest delta area in the world. It is rich in the flora and fauna, it accounts for about 90% of Nigeria's Crude oil, which is the major plank upon which the economy rests. Aside from these reserves, the region is the second largest palm oil producer in the world next to Malaysia. The region is also blessed with potential in fishery, forest products and good climatic conditions that support tourism and wildlife. This study examines the relationship between corporate growth and the fight against poverty in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This study uses a mixed-methods approach to evaluate how entrepreneurship promotes economic growth and reduces poverty. The key findings shows that, while entrepreneurship has a lot of promise to decrease poverty, structural barriers such as poor infrastructure, limited financial resources, and uncertain business climate make it difficult to thrive. The paper concludes with policy proposals that may promote entrepreneurship as a viable route of overcoming poverty in the Niger Delta Villages.

Keywords

Entrepreneurship, Poverty Alleviation, Niger Delta, Economic Development, Access to Finance, Sustainable Development

1. Introduction

The Niger Delta location is one of the maximum huge economic zones in Nigeria due to its abundance of crude oil, which is the main source of foreign exchange earning. Paradoxically, regardless of this wealth, the area is characterized by excessive stages of poverty, unemployment, and socio-monetary instability. This contradiction has brought about unrest and clamour for greater sustainable and inclusive economic fashions. Entrepreneurship development has emerged as a proposed strategy to cope with those challenges, [2].

One of the goals of economic development strategies pursued by successive Nigerian governments through entrepreneurship has been the reduction of poverty through job creation [15]. Many government policies over the years were meant for the achievement of targeted objectives on the development of indigenous entrepreneurship.

The relationship between entrepreneurship improvement and poverty remedy has received sizable interest in current years, particularly in developing economies in which pov-

*Corresponding author: oborehj@gmail.com (Oboreh Justina)

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erty is excessive in spite of abundant natural resources. Entrepreneurship is more and more viewed as a mechanism for producing financial boom, fostering innovation, and creating jobs, therefore contributing to poverty reduction [1, 5]. This is specifically relevant in regions like the Niger Delta, where there is abundant oil wealth with deep-rooted poverty, high unemployment, and socio-monetary underdevelopment [17].

The Niger Delta provides a paradox of wealth and deprivation. Which have led to social unrest [3, 7]. Poverty in the Niger Delta is worsened by environmental degradation because of oil exploration, inadequate infrastructure, corruption, and political instability [8].

Improving entrepreneurship in the Niger Delta has the potential to be a long-term strategy for alleviating poverty by promoting resilience and financial diversification in an area heavily dependent on oil [6]. SMEs may boost local economies, provide employment, and empower underprivileged groups, including children and females, who are often disproportionately affected by poverty [13]. However, the area has several obstacles to promoting an entrepreneurial boom, such as limited access to capital, insufficient training of capabilities, and an unsupportive regulatory environment [10]. These restrictions prevent the establishment of a strong entrepreneurial climate that would aid in lifting the region out of poverty.

The nexus among entrepreneurship and poverty is properly-hooked up, with literature suggesting that entrepreneurship can increase financial growth, create jobs, and decrease inequality [10]. However, the extent to which this is applicable to the Niger Delta, marked with bad infrastructure, environmental degradation, and systemic corruption.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation in the Niger Delta. By examining the experiences of local entrepreneurs and the challenges they face, this study will be able to provide insights into the role of entrepreneurship as a tool for economic empowerment and poverty reduction in the region. Specifically, the study addresses the following questions:

- 1) How does entrepreneurship impact poverty reduction in the Niger Delta?
- 2) What are the major barriers to entrepreneurship development in the region?
- 3) What policy interventions are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship in alleviating poverty?

2. Conceptual Issues

2.1. Poverty Reduction and Entrepreneurship

Particularly in developing nations, entrepreneurship is becoming more widely acknowledged as a force behind economic expansion and a means of combating poverty [4, 12]. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM),

countries with greater entrepreneurial activity often have lower rates of poverty [5]. Entrepreneurship provides a practical path out of poverty by encouraging innovation, producing money, and creating jobs. This is especially important in undeveloped but resource-rich areas where there are few traditional job options.

2.2. Challenges to Entrepreneurship in Developing Regions

Notwithstanding the possible advantages entrepreneurship has in underdeveloped nations, it is still fraught with difficulties. The most often mentioned barriers are inadequate infrastructure, restricted access to financing, and an unpredictable policy environment [10]. These issues are made worse in the Niger Delta by high levels of corruption, lack of essential services, and environmental damage caused by oil extraction [17]. As a result, a lot of business endeavors in the area have trouble surviving.

2.3. Entrepreneurship in the Niger Delta Context

Numerous socioeconomic reasons limit entrepreneurial development in the Niger Delta. Agriculture and small businesses in particular have been neglected as a result of the region's oil-dependent economy [6]. In addition, the region's ongoing militancy and war have deterred investment and stunted the creation of new businesses. However, there is some optimism due to recent moves by the Nigerian government and other organizations to support entrepreneurship through microfinance projects and skill-acquisition programs [14].

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. Survey research design is appropriate for the study because data were collected from a representative sample of the population while the result obtained was generalized on the entire population in the study area. The study focuses on the Niger Delta region, comprising nine oil-producing states: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers. This region is known for its complex socio-political dynamics, environmental degradation due to oil extraction, and persistent poverty despite its vast natural resources, [9].

The sample of the study was 200 which is made up of 22 residents of Abia state, 22 residents of Akwa Ibom state, 22 residents of Bayelsa state, 22 residents of Cross River State, 22 residents of Edo State, 22 residents of Imo State, 22 residents of Ondo State, 22 residents of Rivers state and 24 residents of Delta State the sample was arrived at using Taro-Yamen's formula of an infinite population. The sampling technique for the study was multistage technique. This is because the technique allowed the researcher to sample in

stages hence three groups of respondents is required for the study. In arriving at the sample size, the entire population was divided into nine strata based on the categories of respondents using stratified proportionate sampling technique. In each of the 9 stratum, simple random sampling (balloting) was used to select the respondents according to the proportion in each of the stratum since there is a comprehensive list of the entire population of the respondents thereby, giving each sample an equal opportunity of being selected.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts namely, Section A, B, C and D. Section A was used to elicit information on the personal data of the respondents, Section B: for the entrepreneurship development, Section C: is on the poverty and economic well-being while Section D: talked about the social and environmental factors. The instrument was faced and content validated by five experts. The suggestions of the experts were used to improve the final draft of the questionnaire. The validated instrument was administered to all the respondents and recovered immediately the data obtained from the trial testing were subjected to reliability

analysis using Cronbach Alpha method which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.91 indicating that the instrument is reliable for the study.

4. Results

The mean, standard deviation, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the various groups (entrepreneurs and stakeholders) based on their answers to pertinent questionnaire items was determined in order to perform a statistical analysis using Taro-Yamen's formula, with a particular focus on how entrepreneurship affects poverty reduction in the Niger Delta. The ANOVA's p-values, which show whether or not group differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), is shown in the Significance (Sig) column.

A tabular form for selected questions related to entrepreneurship's impact on poverty reduction. Since the Likert scale (1-5) responses are the basis, items related to poverty reduction are the main focus:

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, and ANOVA Results on the Impact of Entrepreneurship on Poverty Reduction.

S/n	Items	Mean (Entrepreneurs)	Mean (Stakeholders)	Standard Deviation	Sig (ANOVA)	Remark
1	Do you believe entrepreneurship is a viable solution to poverty?	4.35	3.92	0.72	0.01	Significant; Entrepreneurs believe more strongly in entrepreneurship as a solution to poverty
2	Has entrepreneurship improved your standard of living?	4.22	3.81	0.77	0.03	Significant; Positive effect of entrepreneurship on personal living standards is observed
3	Has your household income increased since starting your business?	4.15	3.67	0.84	0.02	Significant; Entrepreneurs report higher household income increases.
4	Do you save a portion of your earnings from your business?	3.85	3.40	0.92	0.04	Significant; Entrepreneurs save more frequently than stakeholders expect.
5	Has your access to healthcare improved since becoming an entrepreneur?	3.78	3.45	0.89	0.05	Marginally significant; Entrepreneurs report better healthcare access improvements
6	Has entrepreneurship helped reduce poverty in your community?	4.05	3.62	0.81	0.02	Significant; Entrepreneurs perceive greater community-wide poverty reduction due to entrepreneurship

Explanation of Key Results:

1) Mean (Entrepreneurs vs. Stakeholders): The mean scores show how the two categories (enterprises and stakeholders) are generally perceived. Higher mean values for entrepreneurs indicate that they have a more favorable opinion of entrepreneurship's ability to combat poverty.

2) Standard Deviation: This figure shows the degree of variation in answers from the mean. While a greater score indicates a range of perspectives, a lower standard deviation indicates agreement among respondents.
 3) ANOVA Significance (Sig): The p-values, which are usually compared to 0.05, show whether the responses of stakeholders and entrepreneurs differ in a way that is

statistically significant. A difference is considered significant if the p-value is less than 0.05, and not statistically significant if the p-value is more than 0.05.

4) Remark: This column highlights the distinctions between stakeholders and entrepreneurs when interpreting the statistical significance of the findings.

Key Insights:

- 1) Viability of Entrepreneurship as a Poverty Solution: There is a significant difference (p = 0.01) in the conviction of entrepreneurs versus stakeholders on the viability of entrepreneurship as a means of alleviating poverty.
- 2) Improvement in Standard of Living: Compared to stakeholders' perceptions, entrepreneurs perceive a higher improvement in their standard of living as a result of their entrepreneurial endeavors (p = 0.03).
- 3) Household Income Increase: A significant finding (p =

0.02) indicates that entrepreneurs often see bigger gains in household income after starting their own business.

- 4) Savings from Earnings: It is statistically significant (p = 0.04) that entrepreneurs save more money than stakeholders think they do.
- 5) Healthcare Access: Although this difference is only marginally significant (p = 0.05), entrepreneurs report having somewhat greater access to healthcare services than stakeholders anticipate.
- 6) Community-Wide Poverty Reduction: Compared to stakeholders, entrepreneurs believe that entrepreneurship has significantly reduced poverty in their areas (p = 0.02).

The key barriers are captured, where respondents highlighted issues like lack of capital, poor infrastructure, insecurity, etc. To assess how Entrepreneurs and Stakeholders perceive these barriers differently using statistical methods.

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and ANOVA Results on Major Barriers to Entrepreneurship Development in the Niger Delta.

S/N	Items (Barriers to Entrepreneurship Development)	Mean (Entrepreneurs)	Mean (Stakeholders)	Standard Deviation	Sig (ANOVA)	Remark
1	Lack of capital	4.65	4.20	0.55	0.02	Significant; Entrepreneurs view lack of capital as a bigger barrier
2	Poor infrastructure (roads, electricity, water supply)	4.50	4.30	0.62	0.04	Significant; Entrepreneurs experience infrastructure challenges more intensely
3	Inadequate market access	4.25	3.85	0.68	0.03	Significant; Entrepreneurs report higher challenges with market access
4	Corruption	4.10	4.00	0.72	0.09	Not significant; Both groups perceive corruption as a strong barrier
5	Insecurity (militancy, kidnapping, etc.)	4.35	4.05	0.79	0.07	Not significant; Both groups perceive insecurity as a critical barrier.
6	Lack of government support	4.55	4.18	0.64	0.02	Significant; Entrepreneurs feel the lack of government support more acutely.
7	Gender discrimination	3.85	3.40	0.86	0.03	Significant; Entrepreneurs, especially female ones, perceive gender issues as a bigger barrier
8	Cultural norms	3.90	3.50	0.81	0.04	Significant; Cultural barriers are more noticeable to Entrepreneurs.
9	Lack of education or skills development opportunities	4.20	3.95	0.77	0.05	Marginally significant; Entrepreneurs see education as more of a barrier
10	Social unrest (community conflicts, strikes, etc.)	4.40	4.15	0.71	0.06	Not significant; Both groups rate social unrest as a high barrier

Key Points from the Analysis:

- 1) **Lack of Capital:** According to a significant ANOVA result ($p = 0.02$), entrepreneurs (mean = 4.65) view a lack of capital as a greater obstacle than stakeholders (mean = 4.20), suggesting that access to financing is a more urgent concern for entrepreneurs.
 - 2) **Poor Infrastructure:** Entrepreneurs (mean = 4.50%) rate infrastructure problems—such as insufficient roads, energy, and water supply—much higher than stakeholders (mean = 4.30%). The difference is statistically significant ($p = 0.04$), underscoring the operational difficulties faced by entrepreneurs.
 - 3) **Inadequate Market Access:** With significant results ($p = 0.03$), entrepreneurs (mean = 4.25) see inadequate market access as a serious restriction, more so than stakeholders (mean = 3.85). This illustrates how difficult it is for entrepreneurs to reach larger audiences.
 - 4) **Corruption:** Despite the fact that both groups view corruption as a serious problem, there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of stakeholders and entrepreneurs ($p = 0.09$). This implies that corruption is viewed as a barrier by both parties.
 - 5) **Insecurity:** Although the difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.07$), both groups concur that insecurity, such as militancy and kidnapping, presents a substantial impediment to enterprise (Entrepreneurs mean = 4.35, Stakeholders mean = 4.05).
 - 6) **Lack of Government help:** Entrepreneurs feel more disadvantaged by inadequate governmental help, as evidenced by their higher rating of lack of government support (mean = 4.55) than stakeholders (mean = 4.18), with a significant p-value (0.02).
 - 7) **Gender Discrimination:** With a significant p-value (0.03), entrepreneurs—especially female respondents—rate gender discrimination as a more major obstacle (mean = 3.85) than stakeholders (mean = 3.40).
 - 8) **Cultural Norms:** Entrepreneurs (mean = 3.90) perceive cultural norms as a major obstacle to entrepreneurship, whereas stakeholders (mean = 3.50), with $p = 0.04$.
 - 9) **Lack of Education or Skills:** Compared to stakeholders (mean = 3.95), entrepreneurs are somewhat more likely to view a lack of education or skills as a hindrance (mean = 4.20). At $p = 0.05$, this difference is marginally significant.
 - 10) **Social Unrest:** Although social unrest is rated as a high barrier by both groups, there is no significant difference between Entrepreneurs and Stakeholders ($p = 0.06$), indicating that both groups suffer from the negative consequences of interpersonal disputes.
- The interventions were identified, where respondents discuss policies related to access to finance, infrastructure, education, and government support.

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation, and ANOVA Results on Policy Interventions to Enhance Entrepreneurship's Effectiveness in Alleviating Poverty.

S/N	Items (Policy Interventions)	Mean (Entrepreneurs)	Mean (Stakeholders)	Standard Deviation	Sig (ANOVA)	Remark
1	Improved access to finance	4.70	4.25	0.50	0.01	Significant; Entrepreneurs prioritize finance access more highly
2	Better infrastructure (roads, electricity, water supply)	4.60	4.30	0.55	0.03	Significant; Entrepreneurs stress infrastructure needs more than Stakeholders
3	Entrepreneurship education and skill development	4.45	4.05	0.60	0.02	Significant; Entrepreneurs see education as more crucial to business success
4	Government policies and incentives	4.50	4.20	0.65	0.04	Significant; Entrepreneurs feel more strongly about the need for government intervention.
5	Financial support from multinational oil companies	4.30	4.00	0.70	0.05	Marginally significant; Entrepreneurs advocate more for financial support from multinational companies.
6	Investments in local business and market access	4.25	3.95	0.68	0.03	Significant; Entrepreneurs want stronger investment in local businesses.
7	Promote local businesses and entrepreneurship initiatives	4.40	4.15	0.62	0.04	Significant; Entrepreneurs prioritize local business promotion policies more

S/N	Items (Policy Interventions)	Mean (Entrepreneurs)	Mean (Stakeholders)	Standard Deviation	Sig (ANOVA)	Remark
8	Environmental protection and sustainability efforts	4.20	3.85	0.75	0.05	Marginally significant; Entrepreneurs recognize environmental protection as necessary.
9	Increased security and reduced militancy	4.55	4.35	0.58	0.06	Not significant; Both groups agree on the importance of improving security
10	Incentives for innovation and technology adoption	4.35	4.05	0.65	0.04	Significant; Entrepreneurs call for more incentives for innovation and tech use.

Key Points from the Analysis:

- 1) Better Access to Finance: The contrast between the importance of access to finance for entrepreneurs (mean = 4.70) and stakeholders (mean = 4.25), which is statistically significant ($p = 0.01$), is noteworthy. This illustrates how urgently entrepreneurs need improved finance services to grow their companies.
- 2) Better Infrastructure: With significant results ($p = 0.03$), entrepreneurs (mean = 4.60%) had a stronger perception of the need for improved infrastructure (roads, power, and water supply) than stakeholders (mean = 4.30). Poor infrastructure probably has a more noticeable effect on entrepreneurs' day-to-day operations.
- 3) Entrepreneurship Education and Skill Development: The relevance of education and skill development is significantly different for entrepreneurs (mean = 4.45) compared to stakeholders (mean = 4.05), with entrepreneurs placing a greater value on it ($p = 0.02$). This demonstrates how entrepreneurs understand the importance of lifelong learning to stay competitive.
- 4) Government Policies and Incentives: The difference between the importance of government policies and incentives to entrepreneurs (mean = 4.50%) and stakeholders (mean = 4.20%) is statistically significant ($p = 0.04$). The success or failure of government assistance is probably felt more strongly by entrepreneurs.
- 5) Financial Support from Multinational Oil Companies: Although the difference is only slightly significant ($p = 0.05$), entrepreneurs (mean = 4.30) also believe that financial support from multinational oil companies is more important than stakeholders (mean = 4.00). This implies that entrepreneurs want their businesses to be more corporately responsible.
- 6) Investments in Local firms and Market Access: With a significant result ($p = 0.03$), entrepreneurs (mean = 4.25) place a higher value on the necessity of investments in local firms and better market access than stakeholders (mean = 3.95).
- 7) Encourage Local firms: Entrepreneurs (mean = 4.40) assess the necessity of measures to encourage local

firms much higher than stakeholders (mean = 4.15; $p = 0.04$). Local support may be seen by entrepreneurs as essential to their success.

- 8) Environmental Protection: Although this difference is only marginally significant ($p = 0.05$), entrepreneurs (mean = 4.20%) place a somewhat higher priority on environmental protection initiatives than stakeholders (mean = 3.85). Oil spills and other environmental problems probably make entrepreneurs feel more exposed.
- 9) Security and Militancy: Although the difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.06$), both stakeholders (mean = 4.35) and entrepreneurs (mean = 4.55) concur that more security and less militancy are crucial. This suggests that both parties acknowledge the importance of security in the growth of business.
- 10) Innovation and Technology Incentives: With a significant p-value (0.04), entrepreneurs (mean = 4.35) place a higher priority on the need for incentives for innovation and technology adoption than stakeholders (mean = 4.05). Technology is seen by entrepreneurs as a means of increasing the effectiveness and competitiveness of their companies.

Discussion of Findings

According to the report, the majority of Niger Delta entrepreneurs are between the ages of 25 and 45, with a significant gender gap of 35% female and 65% male. Only a tiny percentage of participants work in manufacturing or other industrial activity; the majority are petty traders and small-scale farmers. Although there are differences in educational achievement, a sizable percentage of them have completed secondary or higher education. The region's youthful and enterprising attitude is shown by this demographic data, which is essential for economic vibrancy.

The results show that entrepreneurial growth and poverty reduction are positively correlated. In various communities, entrepreneurs reported higher incomes, improved living conditions, and the development of jobs. About 70% of those surveyed said that their business ventures had a major impact in lowering household poverty. This is consistent with previous research that highlights the function of entrepreneurship

as a means of achieving economic empowerment, particularly in regions that are resource-rich but yet lack development [16, 11].

Despite the positive impact of entrepreneurship, several barriers hinder its full potential:

- 1) Limited Infrastructure: Entrepreneurs cited limited water availability, shoddy roads, and unstable energy as the main obstacles to company operations and expansion.
- 2) Limited Access to Finance: Entrepreneurs found it challenging to grow their businesses due to the high interest rates charged by microfinance institutions and the scarcity of reasonably priced loans.
- 3) Unstable Business Environment: It was determined that insecurity, political unpredictability, and corruption are deterrents that have a detrimental impact on regional investment and entrepreneurship.

These barriers illustrate the complex challenges that entrepreneurs face in the Niger Delta, which must be addressed to unlock the region's economic potential.

The findings support earlier research showing that entrepreneurship has a substantial potential to reduce poverty in the Niger Delta [1, 10]. To fully realize this promise, however, significant barriers are presented by enduring structural issues. Inadequate infrastructure, restricted financial resources, and an unfriendly business climate make it difficult for entrepreneurs to build their companies and make a substantial contribution to the expansion of the economy.

Although there has been considerable success in government and international initiatives to encourage entrepreneurship, their effectiveness has frequently been constrained by inadequate coordination with local realities and poor execution [14]. A comprehensive strategy that tackles both the macroeconomic environment and the specific obstacles faced by individual entrepreneurs is required if entrepreneurship is to be a more successful instrument for reducing poverty.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Entrepreneurship has the potential to reduce poverty in the Niger Delta, but there are still many obstacles to overcome. Enhancing infrastructure, increasing financial accessibility, and fostering a more stable and open business climate. These factors must be addressed by policy makers; given their critical roles in promoting economic development in the area, special assistance for young people and female entrepreneurs is also imperative.

To better understand the long-term effects of entrepreneurship on poverty reduction in the context of the Niger Delta, future study should concentrate on longitudinal studies.

Abbreviations

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

Author Contributions

Oboreh Justina is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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